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WHO IS COLONEL JENNISON?

Jennison---His Raids in Missouri---His Murders, Robberies, and House Burnings.

We do not propose to do anything more than call the attention of the whole country to the exposition of the acts of Jennison, for more than a year past, contained in the article below. We may particularly call the attention of the President to this communication, and if he desires information as to the writer, we refer him to Mr. Bates, his Attorney General. That gentleman, we venture to say, will give him his full indorsement. Mr. Bingham is the Treasurer of the State of Missouri, selected by Gov. Gamble for his honesty and his fidelity to the Union. The record of Jennison's crimes is such as to place him far in advance of all those bad men who have figured in this civil war on either side; and we cannot but pity those citizens of St. Louis who have been seduced, by desperate demagogues, into a public exhibition of sympathy for him. Their mortification must be sufficiently great without further allusion to it.

EDITOR OF THE REPUBLICAN: Having observed, to my surprise, an article in the *Missouri Democrat*, lauding the notorious Jennison, and denouncing his arrest, as having been caused by the malignity of Secessionists and ultra pro-slavery men, I was naturally led to suppose that the editors of a journal so respectable, had been incautiously misled by misrepresentations from partial and interested sources, and I addressed them a communication, requesting its insertion in their paper, that justice might be done to truly loyal citizens in the western portion of our State, and our noble cause relieved from the odium which identification, in any manner, with characters so utterly depraved as those of this Jennison, and a large portion of his associates, must necessarily bring upon it.

They have, up to this time, omitted to place my communication before their readers, and I am compelled, in order to vindicate my neighbors, who have *properly* condemned the outrages of this brigand, to reach the public through some other channel—regretting that there should be found a paper within the limits of our suffering State, whose columns are not open to such a purpose.

A brief narrative of transactions, in which he has figured as principal since the commencement of the civil strife in our State, will show that there is nothing in his conduct or character which can entitle him to the respect or sympathy of honorable men. On the contrary, his gross abuse of power, exhibited in low acts of oppression against defenseless individuals, and the plunder and desolation of entire communities, has been such as should impel good citizens everywhere to unite in invoking against him the punishment due to a felon.

Several of his band of jayhawkers made their appearance in the vicinity of Kansas City, early in last June, and were observed skulking about the pickets of the United States troops, then temporarily stationed there, under the command of Captain (now Major) Prince.

This discreet officer, justly suspecting the purpose of their mission to be none other than pillage, peremptorily ordered them beyond the limits of our State. Although reluctantly compelled to heed this mandate, at the time, they held themselves in readiness to renew their visit, as soon as a favorable opportunity should be presented, and after the withdrawal of the troops under Major Prince, they again entered Missouri. They were led, on this occasion, by their chief, Jennison, in person, and, unfortunately for the honor of our arms, were associated with Major Van Horn and Col. Weir, in their expedition against a formidable rebel force, assembled at Harrisonville, in Cass county. Colonel Weir, by virtue of his rank, was in command of the Union forces, and should be chiefly held responsible for the unbridled license which was given to the rapacity of these irregular and lawless attaches of his command. They were permitted to invade the sanctity of private dwellings, and to break open the stores of the merchants of the place, whose goods they transported, in large quantities, to the State of Kansas. These robberies inaugurated that infernal system of predatory warfare which has since desolated the fairest portion of our State. Had the evils of such a system been visited only upon those who participated in the robbery of the Arsenal at Liberty, and the public stores in Kansas City, or those who counseled and encouraged such outrages, they might be regarged as a proper retribution, and cause but little regret in the minds of just persons; but in their widely extended scope, they have embraced entire communities, involving innocent and guilty alike in a common ruin.

After these infamous transactions at Harrisonville, this chief of thieves was next heard of as having, by some unknown influence brought to bear in high quarters, obtained a commission to raise a regiment of mounted volunteers for the service of the United States. As might have been foreseen, scoundrels from all quarters flocked to his standard, as naturally as buzzards collect around their favorite carrion. His recruits were such as had no scruples in furnishing themselves with horses from the stables of our citizens, without money, without price, and equally without leave. The self-sustaining regiment, as it was ominously christened, was soon equipped for the field, and its elated commander, as much surprised, perhaps, as others, at an elevation so different from his deserts, impatiently awaited the first favorable pretext which could serve as a plausible excuse for a descent into our State. As such a

pretext was not long wanting, he soon came, pompously marching his forces in extended files through the streets of Kansas City,

"A thousand men to plunder trained."

The signs of his diabolical purposes were so ostentatiously exhibited that no cheers greeted the imposing array, nor from house top or balcony was there any joyous waving of that glorious star spangled banner, which he came to dishonor.

Conspicuously marching in his regiment, was a company composed exclusively of negroes, armed, uniformed, and mounted as soldiers of the United States. This, and other signs equally significant, indicated a John Brown raid, rather than the march of loyal troops to uphold the Constitution and laws, in pursuance of which that infatuated man perished on the gallows. The ostensible purpose of his visit was to extirpate, as he vauntingly boasted, the rebel Hays, who, with about one hundred and fifty followers, lay encamped about fifteen miles from Kansas City. Evidently fancying an easy task before him, he immediately put forward several companies of his regiment to kill, capture, or drive him from the country. The rebel leader, however, proved to be a desperate and resolute foe; or, perhaps, he had lived long enough among thieves to form a due estimate of their fighting qualities; but whether relying upon his own courage, or the cowardice of his assailant, he met his attack without flinching, and, after a sharp conflict, drove him back, with the loss of seven or eight men left dead upon the field.

This first rather severe experience which attended the military command of the Jayhawker, seemed to have pretty much the same effect upon his nerves that the first burning has upon those of a child, and he thenceforward took care to confine himself to such portions of Jackson county as abounded more in cattle, horses, mules, and negroes, than rebels. He excuses himself for this cowardice before honest Germans, in St. Louis, by affirming that Hays persistently refused to come out of the brush and fight him on the open field. But these Germans lack the ordinary shrewdness and intelligence of their nation if they can be made to believe that the soil of Jackson county grows brush of a nature so *very* peculiar as to be *penetrable* to rebels and *impenetrable* to loyal soldiers, whose duty it is to pursue and exterminate them. Nor are they likely to regard the man, who, with a vastly superior force, has not courage enough to face a feeble enemy in the brush, as the right sort of a person to be sent to maintain the cause of our Union in a *brushy* country. The truth is, no man can be found who is more familiar with brush than Jennison, and there is none thick enough to turn him, if *booty*, instead of danger, is to be found therein. For purposes of plunder, he would penetrate a thicket of osage oranges, through which a frightened hare would scarcely be able to squeeze himself, and he *really did* go into the brush after Hays, but like a rat finding a weazel at the bottom of his hole, *he came out a great deal faster than he went in.*

After his disgraceful repulse by the rebel and his handful of followers, he gave up all idea of service such as becomes a soldier, and turned

his attention exclusively to rapine and arson. As Independence, both on account of the wealth and defenseless condition of its inhabitants, presented a tempting field for operations of this nature, he soon took up his line of march in that direction. Many chaste and beautiful cottages, in harmony with the general improvement of the country, had been erected on each side of the way from Kansas City thitherward. These, with few exceptions, he first plundered and then burned to the ground, regardless of the wails and shrieks of women and children, thus deprived of clothing, bedding, and shelter. I passed along this road shortly thereafter, and felt as if I were traveling in the wake of the arch fiend of desolation.

As he approached the city, he sent forward detachments, which entirely surrounded it, and closed up all the avenues of escape. They then converged toward the center, driving all the adult male inhabitants before them, until they were prisoners within the railing which surrounds the Court House. Such as did not move forward with sufficient alacrity to please their tormentors had their celerity quickened by the rap of a sword or the prick of a bayonet. A Mr. Cogswell, a highly respected merchant of the place, and known as a constant and unwavering Union man, was severely beaten over the shoulders because he was reluctant to leave his store, until he had fastened the door and closed the shutters. While the male inhabitants (Union men and secessionists) were thus imprisoned under a strong guard, such portions of the regiment as could be spared from this duty, and *especially* the *negro* portion, were busily engaged in ransacking private dwellings and seizing whatever pleased their fancy or excited their cupidity.

Watches and jewelry were pounced upon with the greatest avidity; but they were by no means disposed to slight other articles of value. Finely wrought bed quilts, scarfs, and silk dresses, were appropriated without hesitation, and such of their owners as ventured to remonstrate, were silenced by abuse, abounding with the most foul and obscene epithets. All slaves, who by threats, promises or cajolery of any kind, could be induced to desert their owners, were furnished with escorts to Kansas, and such wagons and carriages as happened to be most convenient were seized to give them easy and comfortable transportation thither.

During the subsequent continuance of this brute in the vicinity of Kansas City, he and his regiment were regarded by all right-minded citizens as a curse to the place—destroying its commerce, plundering its stores, and outraging, in every possible manner, the feelings of its inhabitants. Dry goods, groceries, and drugs were forcibly taken, in large quantities, from dealers, and removed, by wagon loads, to the State of Kansas. Mules, horses, and wagons of farmers, venturing to town on business, were frequently seized and sent in the same direction. Honest, industrious laboring men from the country were sometimes halted at mid-day, and their pockets rifled by soldiers, grown so shameless by license that they took no pains to hide such robberies from public observation. In the presence of these miscreants, life was scarcely more secure than property. They murdered two of the citizens of Kansas City. One fell by their hands without having given

the slightest provocation. The other was shot in an altercation growing out of his very proper refusal to supply his murderer with liquor. Neither of the men thus slain had embraced the heresy of secession, and the first was deservedly popular with all classes for his habitual good nature and unusually accommodating disposition. The shooting of two dogs in the street would usually have elicited more attention than the murder of these Union citizens received from Jennison.

As the bandage, at length, is being removed from the eyes of justice, and as she seems somewhat inclined, after her long and singular forbearance, to look after this criminal, he feels that he may stand in need of friends in the vicinity of her dreaded bar, and endeavors, by shallow attempts at flattery, to worm himself into the favor of the honest German population of St. Louis. In painful truth I can tell them, however, that the dwelling which, from all others, in Kansas City, was singled out by his armed plunderers, and burned to the ground, was that of a worthy German citizen, who was shouldering his rifle in defense of our Union, while Jennison was standing aloof, undecided as to whether he could steal, murder, and burn most securely on his own hook, or under the desecrated flag of the United States. As this German soldier was a member of my own company, as well as a worthy man, I gave Colonel Jennison official information of the wanton destruction of his property by the soldiers of his command. He took no steps, however, to bring the guilty parties to justice, or to give redress to the loyal German, thus ruthlessly stripped of his entire earthly possessions. On a subsequent occasion one of his rascals twice presented a pistol at my own breast, because I interposed and prevented him from taking the life of a quiet German citizen, whom he was pursuing in the mere wantonness of a fiendish desire to imbrue his hands in blood. With such facts as these before them, the worthy Germans of St. Louis can place a proper estimate upon the special consideration with which the wily freebooter now favors them. Knowing that this loyal people are sincerely averse to slavery, he loses nothing in their presence by simply declaring himself an Abolitionist; but he takes care not to go to the full length of the truth by avowing himself a *negro thief*, as he did while surrounded by his minions in Kansas City. As a law-abiding people, they must perceive the vast difference between emancipation, as urged by Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Randolph, Clay, and Lincoln, in harmony with constitutions and laws, and the reckless upheaving of society by John Brown raids, in contempt of the Government which their countrymen are so gallantly fighting to maintain.

Aside from his open and undisguised patronage of theft, robbery and murder, this Jennison has condescended to acts of petty tyranny, such as could be suggested only by the lowest depravity. Three respectable citizens of Kansas City were peremptorily summoned to his presence early one morning. Without alleging anything to their charge, he compelled two of them to accompany his foraging wagons to the country and assist in the pillage of their neighbors. He placed the other under a guard of negro soldiers, and forced him, in that condition, to perform the duties of a menial. These gentlemen had theo-

retically favored secession, but after the commencement of the hostilities they stood aloof from the rebellion, giving neither aid nor comfort to the enemy. One of them, indeed, had zealously urged his friends to take up arms in behalf of our Government. After he had been withdrawn from Jackson county, to the great joy of its people, he was ordered by General Hunter to proceed with his regiment to West Point, in Bates county.

In obeying this order, he maliciously diverged from his direct course, taking Kansas City and Independence in his route. While halting in the former place, he employed a number of teamsters, whom he agreed to pay liberally for their services at the termination of his march. After reaching West Point, he called them into his presence and questioned each as to his place of residence. Those whom he thus ascertained to be citizens of the State of Kansas were paid according to agreement, but he denounced the poor Missourians in bitter, coarse, and insulting language, and drove them from his quarters without money or scrip. Astonished at this novel mode of liquidating such obligations, and supposing their loyalty had been impugned, they offered to establish it by indubitable evidence from his own regiment; but he blasphemously replied, *that he would not take the word of God Almighty himself in their behalf.*

These teamsters, and others, report that his entire route from Independence to West Point may be traced by the ruins of the dwellings of our citizens, which were pillaged and burned without discrimination or mercy. As they were generally constructed of wood, they are now but heaps of ashes, above which the tall chimneys remain in their mute solitude—sad and mournful monuments, such as none in whose breasts linger a feeling of humanity, can contemplate unmoved.

The *Democrat* publishes a proclamation put forth by Jennison on entering our State, and calls attention to it as the only one issued by him during his *rule of ruin* in Jackson county. In this, the editors have been grossly deceived, as in other more important matters. Their hero was as prolific in proclamations as the most renowned of his cotemporaries. These documents, however, were not near so remarkable for their clearness as for their multiplicity. Still, it could be seen, from their general drift, that their "promises to the ear" were intended to have a sufficient margin, outside, for their breakage "in the deed." When critically examined, no citizen could claim security under them who was not actually bearing arms in defense of our Government. All others were denounced as having "no rights which Union soldiers were bound to respect." Their enforcement in Massachusetts, or any other Northern State, even at this time, would leave nine-tenths of their inhabitants subject to all the outrages which he visited upon the defenseless people of Jackson county. No honest property holder felt secure in his vicinity. Rogues, house-burners, murderers, or the fawning sycophants who lauded his infamous deeds, could alone find shelter under his mantle. Except in the immediate vicinity of the rebel Hays, all parts of the country were ransacked and plundered by his men, and other equally rapacious cut-throats, by whom he was perpetually surrounded. Between these and the rebels, scarcely a

farmer escaped. Many were stripped of everything. Mules, horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, wagons, carriages, buggies, household and kitchen furniture, and every species of portable property were transferred to the State of Kansas. The refuse of this wholesale and indiscriminate spoliation, as I was credibly informed, was subsequently sold privately by this Jennison, at his residence, near Squiresville. It is an insult to common sense to affirm that this property of our citizens was confiscated. It was simply taken by force, without privilege of trial or defense on the part of its owners. The *ex parte* statements of the negroes, or of white persons infinitely more degraded, were invariably held as sufficient to warrant these illegal seizures.

I have no old prejudices against this man. It is well known that I warmly sympathized with the people of Kansas, against citizens of my own State, in the "border ruffian" warfare of '56. Nor can it be affirmed that I am an ultra pro-slavery man, since I have all my life held to the principles of our old Whig leader upon this vexed question. My position in relation to the rebellion is equally well known. I foresaw its approach for years, and denounced those who were wickedly conspiring to bring it upon our country. When at length it came I was not found occupying a neutral position between it and my Government, but prompted alike by my feelings and judgment, I united with my few neighbors, alike loyal to the old flag, and took up arms in its defense, months before Jennison availed himself of its cover for purposes of pillage, rapine, and murder. He has rendered our Government no service; but with an ample force at his command, has skulked from duty in the face of its armed enemies, preferring, wolf-like, to gratify his vengeance and rapacity upon the weak and defenseless. He now affects the melting mood and is said to shed tears; but the heart-rending cries of women and children around dwellings consumed to ashes by his orders, were never known to bring moisture to his eyelids. By the perpetration of these atrocities unknown to civilized warfare, and the prostitution of his power to the lowest and most sordid ends, he has given force and plausibility to the most virulent slanders of our enemies, and thus, so far as he can be considered the representative of our cause, has brought upon it shame and dishonor only. It is for the gratification, therefore, of no "secession or pro-slavery malice," but for the proper vindication of the suffering cause of our Union, that the truly loyal men of our border counties invoke justice against the man who has practically been its most deadly as well as most treacherous foe.

Respectfully, G. C. BINGHAM.

JEFFERSON CITY, *May* 6, 1862.

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